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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
30 August 1966

State Department review
completed

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

The North Vietnamese leadership remains adamant on its terms for ending the war, according to a Japanese Socialist Party delegation which recently visited Hanoi.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
The US freighter sunk by the Viet Cong last week has been moved and is awaiting repairs (Para. 1). A CIDG company was ambushed by a Communist force in Phuoc Long Province yesterday (Para. 2). A Viet Cong squad attacked a South Vietnamese outpost three miles south of Saigon today (Para. 3). Two US Marine operations terminate in I Corps (Paras. 4-5). Seaborne supply is apparently continuing in Phuoc Tuy Province (Paras. 6-7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Viet Cong are increasing their propaganda attacks on the government's constitutional assembly elections (Para. 1).

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There has been no noticeable rise in Viet Cong terrorism since the beginning of the election campaign on 26 August, but the Viet Cong are characterizing such incidents as antielection activity (Para. 4). Buddhist Institute moderates apparently are somewhat uneasy about the parallel between the antielection activity of the Institute and of the Viet Cong, but are stopping short of publicly opposing the policy of the militant Buddhists (Para. 5). Other recent Buddhist developments included the self-immolation of a young Buddhist in Saigon, and evidence of Viet Cong attempts to subvert militant monks in the Hue area (Paras. 6-8). Press accounts for the past several days have reported little public enthusiasm over the election in Saigon (Para. 9).

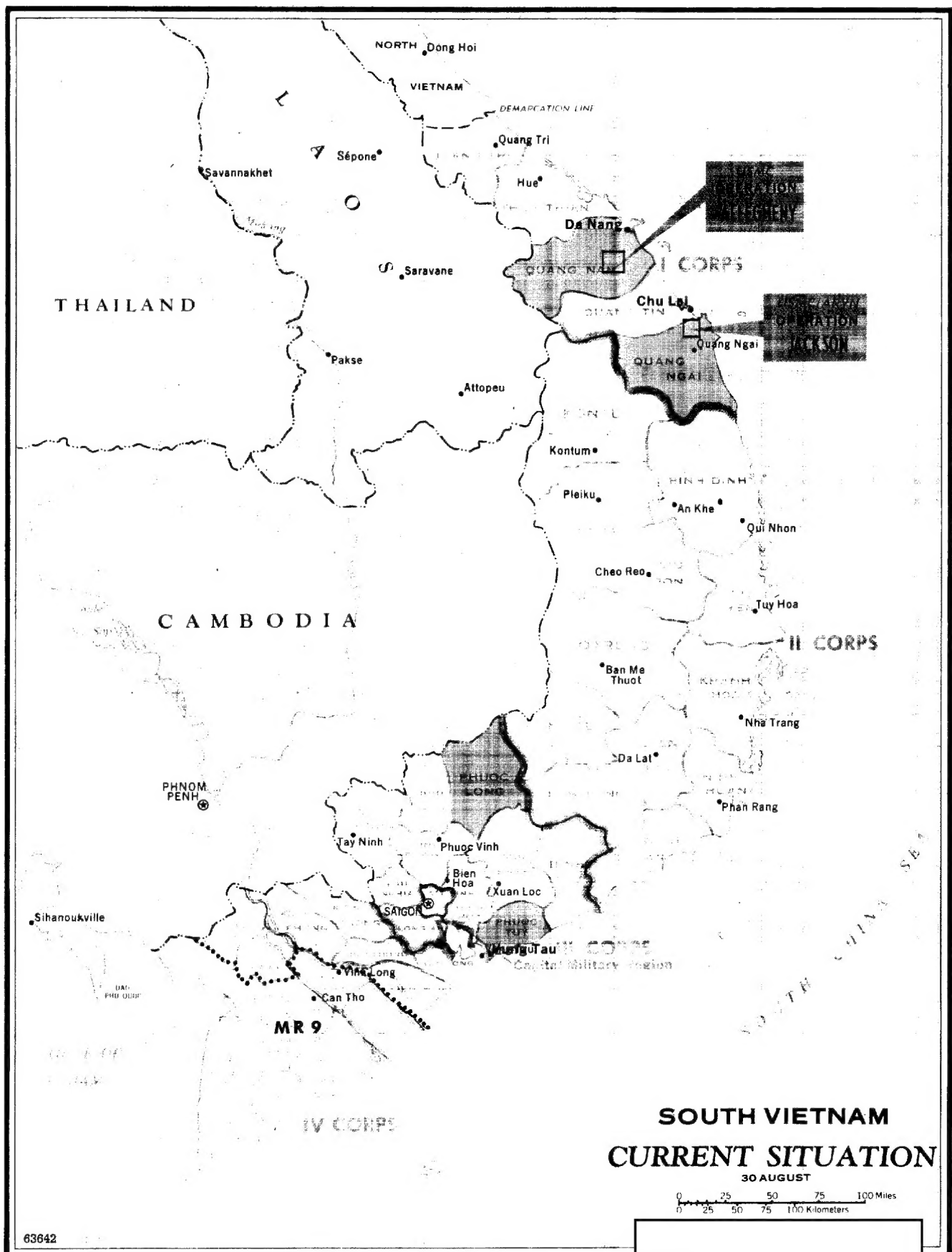
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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. Communist Political Developments: A Japanese Socialist Party delegation recently returned from Hanoi reported that it found no change in the DRV leadership's terms for ending the war. (Para. 1). The North Vietnamese economic delegation which just signed an agreement in Peking arrived in North Korea today (Para. 2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The US freighter Baton Rouge Victory, which was sunk by a Viet Cong mine last week in one of Saigon's two supply channels 22 miles south of Saigon, was hit by a flood tide today. The ship, which had been unloaded, broke loose from her moorings and floated upstream. Salvage tugs and patrol boats have moved the freighter to the vicinity of Vung Tau where it was deliberately placed on a mud bank for further repairs.

2. A South Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) company was ambushed by a Communist force of unknown size yesterday in an area of Phuoc Long Province about 80 miles north-northeast of Saigon. Friendly casualties were six killed, 14 wounded and 11 missing. No enemy losses were reported.

3. A Viet Cong squad attacked a South Vietnamese outpost three miles south of Saigon today. American flareships and armed helicopters were dispatched over the area to suppress the attack. There have been no reports of casualties.

4. The US Marine Operation ALLEGHENY conducted in Quang Nam Province in the mountainous area about 15 miles southwest of Da Nang ended today after killing 113 Communist troops. The US forces also destroyed numerous huts, caves, tunnel complexes, and equipment. Seven Americans were killed and 59 wounded in the action which began on 20 August.

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5. Operation JACKSON, a coordinated search-and-destroy operation with two battalions of US Marines and elements of a South Vietnamese division, ended today in an area about 10 miles south of Chu Lai in Quang Ngai Province. Final results for this operation which began on 26 August were one American wounded and three Viet Cong killed and three captured. Twenty-four tactical air strikes were flown in support of the operation.

Seaborne Supply in Phuoc Tuy Province

6. Since early July, Viet Cong junks have reportedly been landing supplies about 15 miles east of Vung Tau in the coastal province of Phuoc Tuy. A recent, unconfirmed report describes the method of operation for unloading. Four junks approach the landing zone, and three of them wait offshore while the fourth makes a landing and off-loads. If spotted by allied aircraft, the three waiting boats attempt to escape by moving in different directions.

7. On 25 August, US Marine reconnaissance patrols reported finding Communist positions, booby traps, and trails in the area. There have also been reports of visual sightings of footprints along the shore. Previous reports indicate these off-loading points may be integral to the resupply system not only of Phuoc Tuy Province, but also to Communist War Zones "C" and "D".

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] broadcasts of the Viet Cong's Liberation Radio during the past four days have carried an increasingly high volume of commentaries attacking the Saigon government's constitutional assembly elections. Yesterday, approximately one half of the Communists' broadcast time was devoted to such diatribes. Numerous reports also continue to be received from the provinces relating to Viet Cong plans to disrupt the elections.

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4. Actual incidents of terrorism by the Viet Cong remain scattered thus far, with no appreciable rise in the number of such acts evident since the beginning of the election campaign on 26 August. However, the Viet Cong have attempted to gain maximum impact by describing recent terrorism as antielection activity. Early this morning, the Viet Cong blew up a Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) barracks some 40 miles northwest of Saigon. According to the press, several Viet Cong defectors housed in the building were wounded, but there were no fatalities.

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Buddhist Developments

5. Buddhist Institute moderates apparently are feeling some uneasiness over the parallel between the antielection activity of the Institute and the Viet Cong, but are stopping short of publicly opposing the policy of the Buddhist militants. Thich Tam Chau, who has temporarily stepped aside as Institute chairman, told [redacted] that he himself planned to vote and was privately advising others to do likewise. However, he refused to make his position public. Thich Minh Chau, rector of the Buddhists' Van Hanh University and a close friend of Tri Quang, recently expressed concern over the similarity of Buddhist and Viet Cong election aims to a US official, but begged the question of expressing such an opinion to the Institute council.

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7. Elsewhere in Saigon today, a 20-year-old Buddhist girl burned herself to death. Initial press reports state that a pagoda caretaker discovered the body, and that the event took place without any witnesses. There apparently were no protest letters or explanations left behind by the suicide victim.

8. [redacted] Viet Cong cadre are attempting to establish liaison with militant Buddhist monks in the Hue area. The bonzes' mistrust of the government is now so strong that they have not informed the police of such visits by the Viet Cong.

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Little Election Enthusiasm Evident in Saigon

9. According to press reports received during the past few days, there has been little public enthusiasm over the election in Saigon since the

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beginning of the formal campaign on 26 August. Public events staged by candidates thus far have been sparsely attended. Moreover, the government reportedly has canceled--at least for the time being--the use of government broadcasting facilities by candidates. Several of the initial group of candidates who did make broadcasts apparently had been critical of the government.

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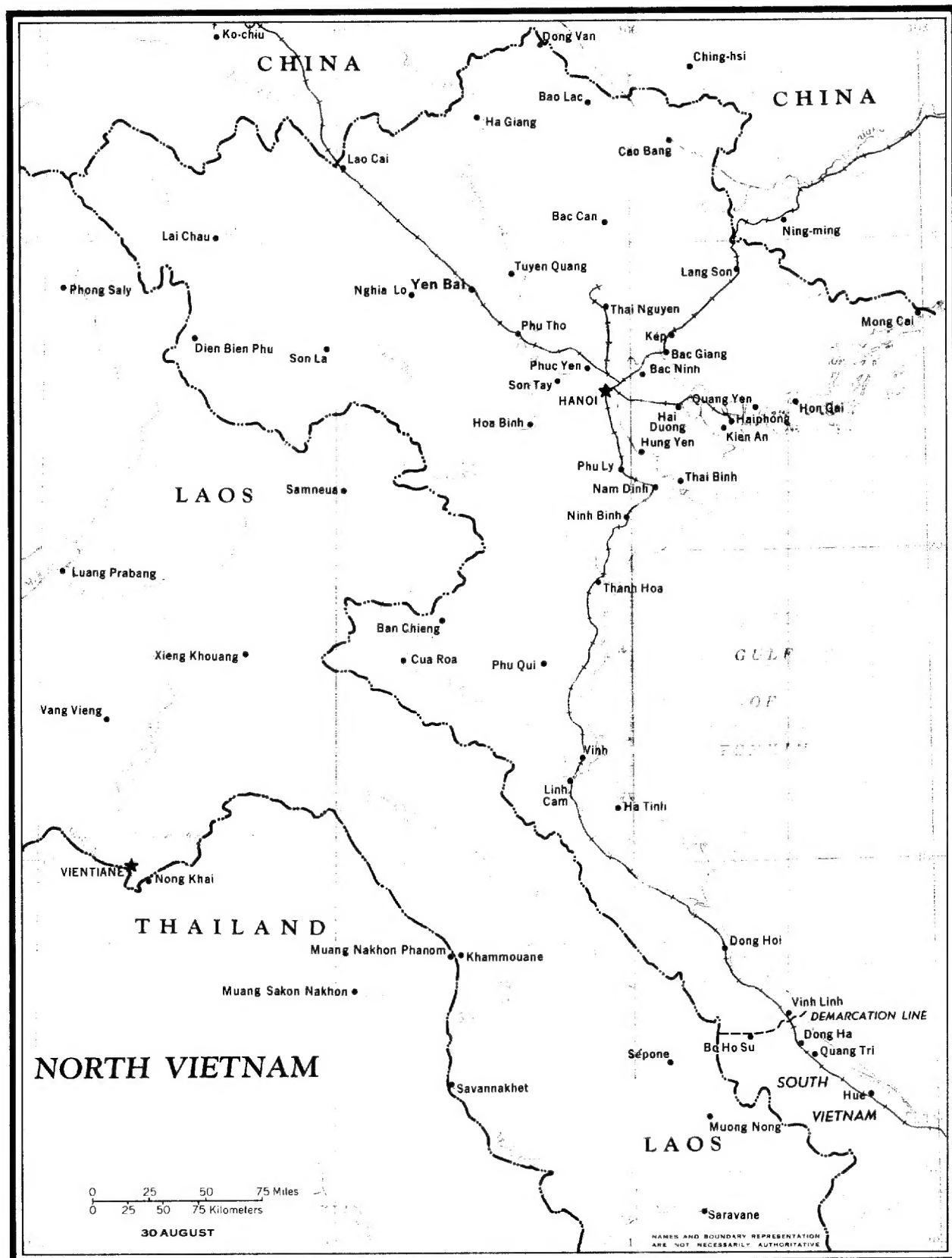
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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The six-member Japanese Socialist Party delegation which recently returned from a visit to North Vietnam reportedly found no change in the DRV leadership's resolve to continue the war until a settlement on Communist terms can be brought about. According to press reports from Tokyo, the delegation, in conversations with President Ho Chi Minh and other DRV officials, was told that North Vietnam will not agree to peace talks unless its four-point peace program is accepted by South Vietnam and the US and that the Vietnamese people would continue to prosecute the war for 20 or 30 years if necessary.

2. The North Vietnamese economic delegation led by Vice Premier Le Thanh Nghi, which just concluded a technical assistance agreement with Peking, arrived in North Korea on 30 August. The delegation will probably sign an aid agreement with the North Koreans and may go on to other bloc countries.

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